

REGION 3—FINGER LAKES

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Weather this spring was largely unremarkable. March temperatures and precipitation were very average, though April was 2.8° F warmer than normal, due in large part to the period of 25-28 April. A strong southerly flow resulted in temperatures about 10° above normal and corresponded with the biggest influx of migrant passerines of the spring. As one example, Yellow Warbler had not been recorded in the Cayuga Lake Basin this spring before 25 April—hundreds appeared throughout the Region that day along with almost a dozen other “new arrival” species.

Rarities for the Region this season included Pacific Loon (with reports in the five years since 2003, it can now almost be considered an annual species in the Region), Snowy Egret, Sedge Wren, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Lark Sparrow.

Ross's Geese were present in several large flocks of Snow Geese this spring, and at least two hybrids, both white and dark morph, were discovered and photographed. Up to two Eared Grebes were seen in Aurora Bay, Cayuga Lake until 16 March, variably in the company of the other three expected grebe species.

Sandhill Cranes continue to be present in the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. These birds appear to be almost resident, only leaving for a few months in winter, apparently dependent on the snow cover. Though cranes are often observed at Knox-Marcellus Marsh and the MNWR Main Pool, they are more frequently found to the north in Region 2, where breeding is most likely to occur in the vicinity of Martens Tract in Savannah. In addition to up to eight birds at MNWR, several migrant cranes were also noted as flyovers in Tompkins County this spring. The shorebird migration was uneventful, with an observation of 12 flyover Red Knots in Union Springs on 31 May providing a hint of the numbers of shorebirds that migrate over the Region without stopping.

The Snowy Owl that was found last season in Ovid remained until 23 April and was fairly reliably seen by many happy birders during its long stay.

Rarer passerines that were enjoyed by many at Sapsucker Woods in Ithaca included a Sedge Wren 29 April-1 May and a White-eyed Vireo 4-6 May. The Sedge Wren, though difficult to see, was often easy to hear as it was skulking in a patch of grasses in the middle of the Lab of Ornithology parking lot, where Chris Tessaglia-Hymes first detected it by song.

The warbler migration this spring had a peculiar dynamic, probably mostly related to Regional weather. Both warblers and other late April-early May migrants were delayed in arrival until 25 April, when a powerful southerly flow brought many new migrants to the Region. Arrivals directly related to this system include Black Tern, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Veery, Swainson's Thrush, Yellow-

throated Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, Chipping Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, and Bobolink. In other words, this system brought the arrivals for a very healthy percentage of the common neotropical migrants that pass through the Finger Lakes. Passerine migration stagnated in early and mid-May, with notable concentrations of migrants largely absent. A Yellow-throated Warbler seen briefly 21 April at Myers Point was noteworthy. Although the bird did not remain in the immediate area, Salmon Creek is bordered by much appropriate habitat for this species, so breeding should be looked for in the future.

A Lark Sparrow seen by Chris Wood at MNWR on 23 May also proved elusive, but nonetheless provides a nice spring record of a very rare species for the Region.

This was an exciting spring for finches in the Region, particularly White-winged Crossbills and Pine Siskins. Numbers of crossbills were very high in early March, continuing from a record winter incursion of the species south of the boreal forest. Counts tapered off through the spring. However, breeding was detected in several places including Summerhill State Forest and even within the town of Ithaca, where a female was seen carrying nesting material on 7 April. A late, strong count of 205 White-winged Crossbills came from Gerrit Vyn at Summerhill State Forest on 17 March. Red Crossbills were present in small numbers early in the period at Summerhill State Forest, and copulation was observed on 14 April. The very large winter presence of Pine Siskins carried over into the spring, though they were not detected in large numbers after the second week of May. Scattered pairs and small groups concentrated in suitable nesting habitat, and more direct evidence showed that siskins at least attempted to nest widely this spring. Several observers noted the presence of "green morph" Pine Siskins among the siskin hordes. This "morph" may actually just be the extremely bright end of the spectrum of variation with Pine Siskin. A second year male American Goldfinch, which was banded at Kestrel Haven near Seneca Lake by John and Sue Gregoire on 14 May 2008, was recovered on 12 March 2009 at Swansea, South Carolina, 650 miles south-southeast.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

CU – Cornell University, Ithaca; DuP – Durland Preserve, Dryden; EHCP – Ellis Hollow Creek Preserve, Dryden; LWL – Lamoka and Waneta Lakes, Tyrone; LPSP – Long Point State Park; MNWR – Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; MyPt – Myers Point; StP – Stewart Park, Ithaca; SSF – Summerhill State Forest; SW – Sapsucker Woods.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: MNWR 15 Mar (LL).

Snow Goose: max 125,000 MNWR 8 Mar (TL).

Ross's Goose: 2 Scipio Center 1 Mar (TJ, SB); 3 Ithaca 7 Mar (KR); 1 Mud Lock 7 Mar (TJ, BW, TL, SB).

Snow x Ross's Goose hybrid: apparent lt morph Ithaca 9 Mar (MS); apparent dk morph Savannah Mucklands 7 Mar (TJ, BW, CW_i, SB, TL).

Cackling Goose: Mudlock 7 Mar (TJ, BW); 2 MNWR 16 Mar (CW_o, JB); Ovid 23 Mar (NS).

American x Eurasian Wigeon hybrid: Ithaca 19-21 Mar (JB, CW_o, MI).

PACIFIC LOON: Sheldrake 19-27 Mar (BM, DN, mob).

Eared Grebe: Aurora Bay thru 8 Mar (TJ, BW, TL, SB); 2 MyPt 14 Apr (CW_o, JB).

SNOWY EGRET: StP 2 Apr (TL, mob); MyPt 2 Apr (mob); MNWR 2 Apr (mob); all three records presumably pertain to a single vagrant encountered three times in one day – incredible.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Sandhill Crane: Ithaca 21 Mar (KR); Brooktondale 10 Apr (SF); up to 8 MNWR 21 Mar-31 May (mob).

Black-bellied Plover: arr MNWR 1 May (LL); MyPt 31 May (JG).

Ruddy Turnstone: arr Ithaca 4-5 May (TJ); last MyPt 24 May (JG).

Red Knot: 12 Union Springs 31 May (CW_o, JB).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: last Deans Cove, Cayuga Lake 25 Apr (TJ, SB, TL, CW_i).

Iceland Gull: last MyPt 12 Mar (PH).

Glaucous Gull: last MNWR 8 Mar (DN).

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: Ovid 1 Mar – 23 Apr (mob).

Long-eared Owl: StP 9 Mar (fide TJ), migrant.

The Kingbird 2009 September; 59 (3)

Whip-poor-will: Dryden 30 Apr (LG); West Danby 4 May (BE, mob); Ovid 31 May (AP).

Red-headed Woodpecker: Dryden 27 May (JMo); Hector 29 May (JG).

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

White-eyed Vireo: SW 4-6 May (TS; mob).

Tree Swallow: arr Dryden 7 Mar (RD), Reg record early.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Ithaca 9 Mar (DN), early; arr Mecklenburg 8 Apr (ND)..

SEDGE WREN: SW 29 Apr-1 May (CTH; mob), very rare in spring.

Gray Catbird: overwintered CU through 5 Mar (RD); arr MNWR 31 Mar (JA), Reg record early.

WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler: Ithaca 26 Apr (TL, CW_i); Ithaca 2 May (JMc).

Golden-winged Warbler: Ithaca 26 Apr (SK); Ithaca 14 May (DN, JM).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: Ithaca 26 Apr (SK), Reg record early.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER: MyPt 21 Apr (CW_o, JB).

Prothonotary Warbler: 2 singing males LWL 23 May (ED).

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

LARK SPARROW: MNWR 23 May (CW_o).

Lapland Longspur: last 9 Seneca Falls 18 Apr (TJ, SB, BW).

RED CROSSBILL: SSF 1 Apr (TJ, NS), copulation; last SSF 19 Apr (TJ, CS).

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL: present through period; Ithaca 7 Apr (TJ) carrying nest material; max 205 SSF 17 May (GV).

Pine Siskin: present thru, many locations.

Am. Goldfinch: 2nd yr m banded Kestrel Haven 14 May 2008 recovered 12 Mar 2009 Swansea, SC.